

THREE PROCEDURES FOR CREATIVELY
JOINING PAPER AND FABRIC SURFACES
IN PAINTING

PROBLEM IN LIEU OF THESIS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION, PROBLEM, AND PROCEDURE

During the past several years, my art work has evolved around a developing concept nurtured by a fascination with timeworn relics of the past. This interest in the past centered itself around an emotional sensibility toward deteriorating fragmentary remnants of archeological finds and relics of ancient art, predominately pottery shards and old textiles. I was intrigued and stimulated by the feeling of age and by the beauty of these worn and irregular shapes.

Burning paper and canvas to obtain shape had already been a technical process for some time. The effect of this process led to the realization that I was in actuality dealing with and creating my own fragments. The burned shapes began to fascinate me because of their delicate and fragile appearance as bits and pieces of the past. Perceiving and reacting to these shapes as fragments of ancient textiles and pottery stimulated an interest which led to the decision to combine fabric surfaces primarily as a textural element, as well as paper and canvas surfaces.

My previous experimentation involved combining or adhering paper and pellow surfaces. After an extensive

investigation concerning the gluing process as a means of joining paper surfaces, I became aware of a need for visual freshness in my art work, and a concern to further the expression of a new evolving concept. This realization of a visual and emotional need led to a decision to expand the possibilities of the process of joining paper to paper, paper to fabric, and fabric to fabric, by gluing, tying, and by mechanical means, such as sewing and bradding. I felt that I had the freedom to choose whether the joining device would be a hidden element, or a visually significant aspect of the work. If the joining device was to be important visually, then it was incorporated as a motif or decorative element meant for surface embellishment.

The investigation concerned itself with reacting to and perceiving an emotional sensibility toward these shapes as fragments of relics, and then arranging and joining the shapes and surfaces by three methods into intuitively satisfying statements of visual freshness. The perception or concept of these shapes as evocations of the past served only as a point of departure for my work. Imitation or representation of the relics was not my intent.

To investigate the three methods of joining paper and fabric surfaces, I selected as my creative project the execution of a minimum of nine pieces. I was concerned with joining three combinations of surfaces: paper to paper, paper to fabric, and fabric to fabric. The methods of

joining served either as a decorative element in the work or as a purely technical requirement. A written journal was used to gather data pertinent to the investigation.

The journal was sequential, and denoted the progression and development of each piece concerning the manner in which the surfaces were joined or adhered. The journal addressed itself to the following concerns:

1. Method of joining
2. Positive and negative aspects of each method of joining
3. Preferred method of methods of joining
4. Personal responses to the pieces

All nine pieces were chronologically arranged. The most pertinent information was then selected from the journal and used as a basis for the written report. Color slides were taken of each finished piece and entered under the Appendix.

The work selected for commentary does not necessarily represent the strongest visual statements of the investigation. However, I felt that the work was representative of the exploration.

For the purpose of clarification, the following introductory form is used at the beginning of each discussion of a selected piece to provide basic information: (1) entry number, (2) title of piece, (3) size of piece, and (4) date of completion.

Included with the commentary on the selected work are sections referred to as Supplementary Information. These sections provided data taken from the journal that expanded significant visual aspects and influences related to the developing concepts of the work. The Supplementary Information section served as another clarifying device to add miscellaneous and background information about the selected pieces.

CHAPTER II

COMMENTARY ON SELECTED PIECES

Originally, the investigation concerned itself with three procedures for joining paper and canvas surfaces. I felt that canvas became a restricting factor in the investigation and decided to incorporate other fabric surfaces as well. Surface embellishment became a visually significant aspect in the investigation and produced the decision to include fabric surfaces for their textural possibilities.

The studio portion of the investigation was completed within a period of six months, from September, 1976 through March, 1977. The first three pieces chosen for discussion were completed during the Fall semester. Although I was displeased with a portion of the work during this part of the investigation, I chose to include them as transitional phases representing the first occurrence of change or discovery which affected the development of the pieces completed during the Spring term. Twelve paintings were chosen for the commentary, selected for their significance to the investigation and discussed in the approximate order of their completion.

Entry 1:

"Winterville Fragment: Tableau", 42" x 28", 9/15/76

Media: Acrylics, polymer medium, graphite, charcoal, glue.

Surface: Italia paper.

This is the earliest piece in the investigation, and its importance lies in the way in which it influenced the development of the work completed during the Spring term.

Paper was the primary surface for this painting. A single sheet of Italia paper was stained with acrylics and was drawn upon while wet with various tools (burnisher, pencil, etc.). An embossed monoprint was stained in the same manner and then burned with a propane torch to obtain the fragmented shapes. The burned shapes were joined to the Italia paper surface with an equal mixture of glue and polymer medium. I encountered some problems adhering the burned shapes because the delicate ash fragments I was trying to preserve tended to crumble when touched. I was able to salvage some of the pieces by using a cotton swab to press the shapes to the glued surface.

I responded favorably to the piece and felt that it was a fresh beginning, forming the basis for the concept concerning my interest in fragmentary remains of the past.

"Winterville Fragment: Tableau" provided a direct basis for several successive paintings and introduced a new visual aspect, the textural element, which was important throughout the remainder of the creative project.

Entry 2:

"Camden Fragment", 42" x 28", 9/17/76

Media: Acrylics, polymer medium, graphite, charcoal, glue.

Surface: Italia paper.

In "Camden Fragment", paper surfaces were again joined by the gluing method. A sheet of Italia paper was stained with acrylics, and then a mixture of black acrylic and polymer medium was poured onto the paper surface. A metal comb was used to push the medium around producing a textural grid. Placing this surface aside to dry, I began staining two more sheets of paper and building textural areas of paint. The surfaces were burned, thus obtaining the fragmented shapes. The burned shapes were glued to the paper surface. I still experienced problems adhering the fragile ash remnants I felt were important to the concept of the piece.

I responded strongly to this piece at its completion because I made an attempt to move from a succession of paintings which relied on dark valued earth tones toward paintings utilizing lighter valued primary colors. Vibrant color as a decorative element was an emphasis in "Camden Fragment" not present in the earlier work.

Supplementary Information: (9/25/76)

After completing "Camden Fragment", I realized that I was involved in a transitional phase concerning the concept

behind the work. At this point in the investigation, my perceptions were influenced by the clay fragments, and not the decorative textile remnants. Paint became a decorative aspect that transferred to the later pieces as sewn, knotted, and bradded motifs.

Entry 3:

"Trilithon", 42" x 28", 11/28/76

Media: Acrylics, colored pencils, glue, plastic.

Surface: Italia paper.

As in the previous two paintings, Italia papers were stained and glued to produce "Trilithon". The paint was built up and then scratched through while wet, creating subtle calligraphic and textural areas. Another paper surface was stained in the same manner and then torn to obtain a large biomorphic shape that was glued to the first surface. Another shape was torn from an embossed monoprint, stained with acrylics, and drybrushed with bronze iridescent paint to emphasize some of the textural relief areas of the monoprint before being glued to the paper surface.

I was both excited and confused about "Trilithon" at its completion because it represented another discovery into color, except this time the color consisted of even lighter values than those in the earlier pieces.

After completing "Camden Fragment" (Entry 2), I experimented with a series of disastrous pieces until "Trilithon"

was finished. I was confused about the sudden change in color and arrangement of the torn shapes. I grew tired of the burning as a method of obtaining shapes and resorted, instead, to tearing the paper. The surface became more textural and decorative, with hints of calligraphic elements that seemed Eastern or Oriental in nature. I felt that I was involved with a completely new concept with no apparent origin of influence. This transition made me realize that I was depending on the gluing process because of its familiarity, and was avoiding the tying and mechanical methods of joining. At this time, the other two joining methods did not appear to be applicable to the current directions and concerns.

Supplementary Information: (12/2/76)

After further analysis of "Trilithon", I decided that it served as another "stepping stone" in the investigation. I found that I was still actually dealing with the same concept concerning the fragmented shapes after all. The surfaces, though subtle, had become more textural and were bordering on the decorative as surface embellishment.

Supplementary Information: (12/12/76)

Surface embellishment became an answer to my inhibitions concerning the tying and mechanical methods of joining. After studying a book on Coptic textiles, I decided to incorporate the two new joining methods as motifs for the

fragmented shapes. The joining devices functioned as visually significant elements in the future pieces instead of as a purely technical solution, which the gluing method had been.

Supplementary Information: (12/14/76)

I felt that I needed time to think, analyze, and relax. Several days were spent away from the studio doing historical research in ancient art, primarily Celtic, Coptic, and early Medieval. I was excited about incorporating the tying and mechanical joining methods into the pieces. The potential of sewing and knotting the surfaces together as motifs stimulated my interest.

Supplementary Information: (1/3/77)

During the Christmas holidays, I spent time analyzing slides of the early pieces, researching more ancient art, and reorganizing my thoughts concerning my interest in fragmented remains of the past. I came to the decision to alter the title of the investigation to encompass fabric, which would include canvas.

Entry 4:

"Oversight", 8" x 7", 1/18/77

Media: Acrylics, metal brads.

Surface: Rice paper.

"Oversight" was the first piece executed after deciding to change the title of the investigation to include fabric

surfaces. I decided to experiment with mechanically joining paper surfaces using metal brads. My intention was to incorporate the brads as a visual element.

Rice paper was stained with acrylics and then torn and burned to obtain the shapes. I was excited about the burned rice paper fragments because their frailty evoked even more feeling of the passage of time than did the heavy paper. The rice paper seemed to have the qualities of a delicate fabric because of its fiber content.

Small metal brads were used to join the paper surfaces. They were pushed through the paper shapes and fastened on the back of the piece. Incorporated along the edges of the shapes, the brads created a border motif that resembled the remains of an old tapestry. They were also attached in the center of the piece, producing a patterned image that became a textural and spatial element, functioning to unify the painting.

My approach to "Oversight" was very cautious, since I had been reluctant to use the mechanical brads in combination with the biomorphic fragmented shapes. After its completion I reacted somewhat negatively to the piece. The rich color excited me, but the brads appeared alien and unsympathetic to the piece. I felt that the brads, because of their manufactured and metallic appearance, contradicted the concept of antiquity which had originally influenced "Oversight". I tried obscuring the brads with dots of paint

applied directly from the tube, but the paint did not adhere successfully to the brads. It puddled, and still left the brads exposed.

I did not feel that "Oversight" was totally unsuccessful. The brads had created a mental block for me as how to incorporate a modern manufactured device as a visual factor while preserving an aura of antiquity. The essence of time-worn remains I tried to capture was not there, but a highly decorative element was. I realized I had been inhibited and cautious about applying the brads. After analyzing "Oversight", concerns for successfully incorporating them as visually unifying elements began to stimulate my interest.

Supplementary Information: (1/22/77)

I became increasingly excited about introducing the joining processes as visually unifying agents in the future paintings. Ornamentation as a by-product of joining surfaces became an important concern. New thoughts relating to surface embellishment began to formulate, and a realization grew that the decorative element functioned as an additive, creating visual tone, complexity, repetition, and variation.

Supplementary Information: (1/25/77)

I did more reading and observing in ancient art, particularly on textiles. The intricate patterns found in border motifs of tapestries, rugs, and various relics of ancient

art intrigued me as a source of creative departure. I saw that the brads, despite their mechanical appearance, could function as a visual motif and still be sympathetic to the piece and to the concept of age.

Entry 5:

"Dobova", 8" x 8", 1/28/77 - 1/31/77

Media: Acrylics, metallic thread, stained embroidery thread.

Surface: Rice Paper.

After experimenting with the mechanical brads as joining devices, I was anxious to develop sewing as an ornamental means of combining surfaces. "Dobova" was begun by staining several sheets of rice paper. Subtle areas of texture were built up with paint applied directly from the tube and then burned with the torch. The paint crackled and bubbled, creating lacy networks of texture. The stained paper was burned into many fragments, and then arranged on a sheet of off-white paper. The shapes were handstitched onto the paper surface with gold metallic thread and stained embroidery thread.

I was interested in stressing the irregular qualities of stitching by hand instead of the mechanical exactness of machine sewing. The gold thread was incorporated as a repetitive border motif. The stained thread was utilized as a linear element, and as a means of creating ornamentation. The handstitching used in combination with the subtle texture

of the rice paper produced additional dimension to the flat paper shapes. The repeated and varied areas of pattern introduced a rhythmical element to the surface.

I was excited about the brilliance of the color played against the rhythmical qualities of the stitched patterns. The surface seemed to come alive with movement.

Supplementary Information: (2/2/77)

I realized that my fascination with timeworn surfaces fused with the decorative element was finally establishing itself. The idea of utilizing the joining processes as visually unifying agents for the paintings was no longer an alien one. I felt for the first time an involved commitment in my art work that expressed an emotional and intellectual sensibility.

Entry 6:

"Reviewed Fragment", 10" x 10", 2/5/77

Media: Acrylics, embroidery thread, gold
metallic thread.

Surfaces: Rice paper and fabric.

"Reviewed Fragment" was the result of my interest in combining fabric as an additional surface. Several different fabric surfaces, along with rice paper, were stained in dark monochromatic tones, and then drybrushed with bronze paint. They were burned to achieve the fragmented shapes, and then arranged on a lighter fabric surface for contrast and adhered by handstitching.

I was surprised at the textural effects of the burned fabric. The synthetic material tended to melt and distort when burned, creating subtle textural folds. The handstitching was introduced as another textural dimension, as well as a joining device, in the form of a repetitive border motif.

"Reviewed Fragment" particularly interested me because of a return to neutralized, subdued color. Color seemed to be more closely aligned in terms of value in this piece and appeared to enforce a feeling of unity. In the previous piece, "Dobova", the handstitching seemed to me to be the major unifying agent. However, because of the interesting value transition and surface texture achieved by burning the fabric, I felt "Reviewed Fragment" could possibly function visually without the sewing.

Since handstitching had already stimulated my interest, I chose to simplify the sewing and incorporate it as additional texture. The stitching appeared almost unnoticed because of its close relationship in value to the dark shapes. Gold thread, in the form of a border motif, was introduced as the only actual outstanding stitched decoration, and it also served to illuminate the edges of the dark shapes.

I responded favorably to "Reviewed Fragment" because of its surface character. I had also enjoyed the brilliance and richness achieved with the thread in the previous piece,

"Dobova", (Entry 5). "Reviewed Fragment", however, seemed to stand out in sharp contrast to "Dobova". I sensed a sculptural earthiness and a timeworn feeling resulting from the dark tones and the subtle textural character of the burned surface.

Supplementary Information: (2/6/77)

I became aware that fabrics offered many interesting surface possibilities in shadow play. The overall neutral tonality in "Reviewed Fragment" seemed to activate the play of light and dark on the textured surface.

Entry 7:

"Topographical Tapestry", 72" x 60",
2/6/77 - 2/9/77

Media: Acrylics, charcoal, glue, polymer medium.

Surfaces: Canvas and fabric.

After introducing fabric in the paper pieces and responding favorably to the surface character, I decided to start working on a large canvas and fabric painting which would involve gluing as a joining method. I wondered how I would respond to treating canvas and fabric surfaces in a similar manner, but on a larger scale. Early involvement with canvas had felt restrictive and cold to me.

I began "Topographical Tapestry" on an early shaped canvas that I had discarded. A grid system, using canvas strips, was added as an armature to serve as a foundation for collage. Various fabric surfaces, pieces of old canvas

paintings, and old prints were glued down, partially covering areas of the grid. Surface texture evolved again, interrupting the regularity of the grid.

The surface was stained with primary colors and then drybrushed with bronze acrylic, which produced a particularly exciting surface richness. The bronze paint produced an all-over tonality that seemed to mask the brilliance of the colors. The primary colors appeared to activate the surface as they glistened through the bronze paint. Dots of paint from the tube were applied to the textured surface and the remaining exposed areas of the grid. Instead of the joining devices functioning as a major motif, ornamentation was achieved directly with paint and brush.

I believed "Topographical Tapestry" to be one of the most successful pieces in the investigation and responded favorably to what happened on the surface. The whole painting seemed to radiate with energy and to command total personal involvement. From a close view, the surface appeared as a mass of different and intricate textural elements, yet none of them seemed to overpower the other. Folds produced by the heavy build-up of collage elements created interesting shadow patterns on the surface.

Supplementary Information: (2/10/77)

"Topographical Tapestry" seemed vastly different in character from the smaller paper pieces. In contrast to the delicate and colorful paper fragments, it appeared

massive and sculptural. I did not consider it a fragmentary shape reminiscent of the past, but viewed it as a tapestry of intricately woven elements that seemed topographical in nature. I felt an energetic involvement with the canvas and fabric surfaces, whereas the paper fragments seemed more intimate and sensual because of their delicate appearance.

Entry 8:

"Regained Fragment", 10" x 10", 2/12/77

Media: Acrylics, Turkish cotton yarn, stained embroidery thread, cotton lace.

Surfaces: Fabric and rice paper.

While "Topographical Tapestry" (Entry 7) was in its stages of completion, I decided to start another small fabric painting in which I would incorporate tying as a means of joining surfaces. My original intention was to limit "Regained Fragment" to fabric surfaces. However, I responded to the rice paper as a textural variant and decided to include it.

The surfaces were stained in dark tonalities and dry-brushed with bronze paint. The surfaces were burned and the shapes arranged on a lighter stained fabric surface for contrast. Another fabric shape was stained, built up with paint, and then burned. The burned shape was placed on the surface as a central image, and pieces of cotton lace were stained and burned and applied to the shape as a repeated decorative motif. Turkish cotton yarn was stained with

bronze paint, then knotted at one end. Holes were made in various areas of the central shape, and the yarn was pushed through and tied on the back of the painting, securing the layers of fabric. The knots were incorporated as a visual ornament. Bronze stained embroidery thread was stitched on top of the central shape, creating a subtle linear and textural emphasis. I had intended to use tying as the only method of physically joining the surfaces. The later decision to include the sewing element, however, helped to achieve a necessary balance in the painting.

The knots were exciting new visual elements. I had responded again in a sculptural way, for the knots in "Regained Fragment" produced a feeling of three-dimensional relief. Although the knots were small they seemed monumental in scale to the surface.

Supplementary Information: (2/13/77)

By this time in the investigation, the joy of discovery and of manipulating new combinations of media and joining devices was unrelenting. I was amazed with my seemingly inexhaustible vigor and involvement. I could hardly finish one painting before I was thinking of another. At this point, I was working on several paintings simultaneously.

Entry 9:

"Expanded Fragment", 10" x 10", 2/14/77

Media: Acrylic, embroidery thread.

Surfaces: Fabric and wallpaper.

I started "Expanded Fragment" with the intention that it become part of a series related to "Reviewed Fragment" (Entry 6) and "Regained Fragment" (Entry 8). "Expanded Fragment" involved fabric surfaces that were handstitched and adhered with glue to another shape burned from wallpaper.

The surfaces were stained, burned, and arranged in the same manner as in Entries 6 and 8. A synthetic fabric, similar to silk, was built up with paint and then burned. The result was a shape that was melted and distorted, and because of its textural surface, it seemed to capture the essence of something incomplete and decayed. The shape served as a central image for the piece and handsewing was incorporated for subtle textural and linear emphasis, rather than as a noticeable decorative motif or as a means of adhering the surfaces.

"Expanded Fragment" was joined with glue to a shape burned from a light brown piece of wallpaper. Since the previous paintings (Entries 6 and 8) were arranged on a somewhat small square format, I decided to mount "Expanded Fragment" on a larger shaped remnant of wallpaper in a composition that was independent of the square format.

I reacted positively to "Expanded Fragment" mounted on the wallpaper fragment because the burned edges were very

pronounced and were reminiscent of age-worn manuscripts of papyrus. Despite its size, "Expanded Fragment" still appeared to possess a feeling of monumental earthiness because of its neutralized color. The burned fabric created fascinating textural areas that appeared topographical, similar to "Topographical Tapestry" (Entry 7). Although the tonal color and value range of "Expanded Fragment" were dark and devoid of brilliant color, they still seemed to imply ornamentation. The iridescent quality of the metallic paint tended to emphasize textural relief. I felt the painting was very rich and visually refreshing.

Supplementary Information: (2/16/77)

I realized that I was arriving at a refreshing concept/image relationship that was personally meaningful and that would serve as a continuing basis for further work.

Entry 10:

"Untitled", 20" x 20", 2/18/77

Media: Acrylics and Turkish cotton yarn.

Surfaces: Rice paper and fabric.

After working predominately on a small format during the investigation, I decided to start a paper painting on a larger scale. I was unsure what would result spatially when the smaller compositions on paper were enlarged twice their size. Paper and fabric surfaces were used and were joined by tying.

The paper and fabric surfaces were stained with acrylics, then placed over an old collograph and drybrushed with bronze paint. The embossed texture of the collograph was transferred to the paper and fabric surfaces, creating a decorative pattern. Visual motifs were also painted on the surface with a brush instead of sewn, as in "Expanded Fragment" (Entry 9). A synthetic silk surface was built up with paint, producing a rich impasto-like surface. The fabric was burned, resulting in a lacy edged shape, then placed as a central image on the burned paper surfaces. The painting was mounted on a white paper surface which served as a backing for the shape. Painted yarn was knotted and attached to the front of the painting, securing all of the surfaces, and tied on the back. The knots formed a row of repeated decorative patterns across the upper part of the central image which suspended or floated the shape on the surface.

I did not respond to Entry 10 as favorably as the previous paintings. However, I did not think it was totally unsuccessful. By attempting to reproduce the smaller fragments on a larger scale, I realized that I had destroyed the intimate feeling found in the earlier pieces.

Entry 10 seemed to have a preplanned effect and the arrangement of the shapes seemed deliberately ordered and formal. Perhaps it was an outgrowth of a preconceived notion that the painting would not function visually on a larger scale. Even though I was somewhat disappointed by the outcome, I did

respond to a feeling of depth and massiveness produced by the dark tones and the knotted relief.

Supplementary Information: (2/20/77)

After analyzing Entry 10 again, I realized I had tried too hard to integrate the shapes and activate the surface exactly as in the smaller paper compositions. I felt that I had determined the outcome of the painting before I began working. By meticulously planning and arranging the shapes I had lost a feeling of sensitivity for Entry 10. I felt that I had come to terms visually with the earlier selected paintings, but was disappointed in Entry 10.

Entry 11:

"Topographical Tapestry II", 65" x 78", 2/22/77 -
2/28/77

Media: Acrylics, cotton yarn, polymer medium,
embossed monoprints.

Surfaces: Canvas and fabric.

I responded so strongly to the last canvas painting, "Topographical Tapestry" (Entry 7), that I was anxious to start another one. I was again interested in tying as a visually meaningful aspect in the painting.

"Topographical Tapestry II" was begun in much the same way as Entry 7. An old canvas served as a foundation for a grid system, with canvas strips forming an armature for layers of collaged fabric surfaces, pieces of old canvas paintings, and old embossed monoprints. Areas of the grid were

left exposed for the purpose of interrupting some of the textural emphasis. The surface was stained with intense primary hues rubbed deeply into the relief areas, then entirely dry-brushed with bronze paint. Paint was applied directly from the tube, impasto-like, encircling the outer edges of the canvas for a border motif. Bronze paint was again drybrushed over these areas.

Canvas strips were built up with paint and then dry-brushed with bronze paint in the same manner. The strips were laid horizontally across the surface, tied at random intervals, and secured by large knots of yarn at the ends. The strips were gathered and attached to the canvas, creating undulating folds that projected from the surface. Two strips were attached at the top and bottom of the painting in the same manner and were interlaced with the horizontal strips. The yarn knots were painted with bronze paint and more textural areas were built up with paint. The paint was heated with a torch, creating bubbly textural areas.

The surface quality of "Topographical Tapestry II" held great excitement for me. It seemed to imply a three-dimensional feeling that the previous canvas painting, "Topographical Tapestry" (Entry 7), did not. In contrast to the more subtle three-dimensional aspects of Entry 7, "Topographical Tapestry II" revealed a dynamic surface character resulting from strong areas of darks in the recesses of the gathered folds. Because of the protruding folds, the sculptural

aspect of the knots, and the ornamental build-up of paint, the surface came alive with energy and movement. The knots served as a visually active ornamental element as well as a means of joining the surfaces, whereas painted decorative motifs were applied flatly to the surface with a brush in Entry 7. Although Entry 11 was subdued, the surface presented a wider range of brilliant color that sparkled through the bronze paint. I was intrigued with it because I considered it to be a potent statement of surface enrichment.

Supplementary Information: (3/2/77)

As an afterthought, I reflected on the previous paper pieces (Entries 1 - 6), and realized that I had become discontented and perhaps bored with paper, and resorted to working on canvas. This departure appears to have been a fruitful experience. I became aware of an enthusiasm that would spark a new interest in further work with paper. Surface energy began to dominate my thoughts at this time, providing information and insight for future paintings.

Entry 12:

"Untitled", 20" x 20", 3/5/77 - 3/8/77

Media: Acrylics, metallic thread, embroidery thread, cotton yarn.

Surface: Rice paper.

After completing "Topographical Tapestry II" (Entry 11), I felt refreshed and anxious to begin another paper painting.

The feeling of sculptural dimension in Entry 11 had made a strong impression on me. I wanted to impose a similar character on paper surfaces, utilizing a tying process as the joining device. I became conscious of a need for revitalization in the paper paintings. The surfaces, especially in Entry 9, seemed devoid of an energy that was present in Entries 7 and 11.

In the usual manner, several sheets of rice paper were stained, torn, and burned. Paint was applied to produce texture and decoration, which resulted in a surface of subtle vitality similar to the previous canvas surfaces. Knotted and sewn elements were incorporated to add dimension and surface embellishment, and to serve as a joining device. I had intended to restrict Entry 12 to the tying process, but a need for linear emphasis prompted me to include sewing as a decorative element.

Entry 12 was a direct result of the previously discussed work, representing growth and introducing a new surface vitality, which proved to be a refreshing conclusion for the investigation. Although I do not feel it was the most successful painting in the investigation, I did respond favorably to it because I felt it was the culmination of my intentions to integrate the surfaces visually with their respective joining processes.

Supplementary Information: (3/9/77)

Reflecting on the selected paper pieces in the investigation, I felt a discontentment concerning a diminishing involvement by comparison to the enthusiasm engendered by the canvas pieces (Entries 7 and 11). I realized that I had begun to fuse their dissimilarities in surface character into an equalized feeling of involvement for both paper and fabric.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this investigation was to experiment with three procedures for creatively joining paper and fabric surfaces, those being: gluing, tying, and mechanical methods. The project was undertaken and the methods of joining were developed concurrently in several stages. As the pieces were executed, information pertinent to the project was recorded in a journal. This proved to be an effective means of collecting data, and of maintaining continuity throughout the investigation. The four concerns to which the journal are addressed are described in Chapter I on page 3. Notes kept during the working period helped in making analyses. The pieces chosen for discussion were specific examples of discoveries or changes that occurred in the course of the investigation.

In the beginning of the investigation, I had become comfortable with working on paper and utilizing glue as a means of joining surfaces. Although I had proposed to expand my creative potential by the addition of the tying and

mechanical methods of joining, I was doubtful about the visual success of these two methods. I therefore relied on the gluing process throughout the first half of the investigation. With the exception of the first three transition pieces discussed in Chapter II (Entries 1, 2, and 3), the remaining pieces selected for commentary were completed toward the end of the project.

Initially, the early paintings (Entries 1 and 2) were influenced by the shape and textural aspects of pottery shards. Entry 3, "Trilithon", served as a bridge between Entry 1 and Entry 2 and the work done following it. At this point, influences began to come from other forms of ancient art, predominately the decorative and textural elements found in fragments of ancient textiles. Originally, the investigation had been restricted to the joining of paper and canvas surfaces. The decision to include fabric, because of its textural possibilities, grew out of my interest in the textiles.

Because of a new interest in this form of ancient art, my doubts about incorporating the tying and mechanical methods into the pieces metamorphosed into positive thoughts. The decision was made to introduce the two methods as visually significant ingredients that would function in the work as joining devices as well.

My first attempt at joining surfaces by the mechanical method involved "Oversight" (Entry 4). The paper surfaces

were adhered with metal brads. Decoration had not, as yet, established itself as a major concern. The piece was approached very cautiously because of my unfamiliarity with the mechanical method. Although I did not feel that Entry 4 was particularly successful, it provided important insight for the remainder of the investigation.

It was with the completion of Entry 4 that decoration established itself as a visual means of joining surfaces. I became aware that the investigation was based on two important concerns that were dependent upon each other: (1) influences leading to the choice of a particular joining method, and (2) the suitability and function of the device as a visually contributing element. At the outset of the investigation I was unaware of these important concerns, and only when the investigation was underway did they surface as significant considerations.

Influences from ancient art and a sensibility toward fragmentary remnants of the past played a dominant role in the development of the entire project. I stated earlier that my intentions were not to lean on the past or to imitate ancient relics, but rather to express an emotional and appreciable sensibility toward any universal remain that has become fragmented by deterioration, use, or age. My stimulation by ancient textiles stemmed from the burning process, already a technical aspect of my work when the project began.

In Entries 4, 5, and 6, decoration became an important visual aspect. It served as the unifying agent and as a vehicle for introducing texture, richness of color, and complexity, as well as functioning as a means of joining surfaces. The ancient textile fragments stimulated my interest in sewing, but only as a point of creative departure.

As the investigation progressed, my enthusiasm and involvement centered around surface texture and the shadow patterns created by it. Energizing the surface became of primary importance to me and I felt that the joining methods of sewing and knotting were becoming less interesting and secondary in my work. Surface excitement had its beginning in Entry 7, "Topographical Tapestry", which was the first canvas piece completed. The surfaces were glued and the surface decoration was applied flatly with paint and brush. I was surprised to find that the many layers of collaged fabric created a surface quality that particularly appealed to me. After the completion of "Topographical Tapestry", I became aware of another element that was gaining importance throughout the investigation. There seemed to be a massive, monumental quality appearing in the work in contrast to the delicacy and color of the previous pieces (Entries 4 and 5). There was a change that moved color to a more neutralized tonality. This quality appeared in the smaller paintings (Entries 8 and 9) also. Sewing and knotting became less noticeable as visual elements, and were replaced by textural

areas created by the paint and fabric build-up. The sewing and knotting devices were introduced as subtle textural and linear elements to enrich the surfaces.

After reviewing the remaining work completed for the investigation (Entries 10, 11, and 12), I realized that they progressed even more in surface texture while remaining neutral in tone. I became increasingly interested in the illusion of their sculptural quality. The surface was reminiscent of topographical maps or charts. The three-dimensional quality was dominated by the textural aspects of the paint, the evenness of tone, and the projection from the surface of the knotted yarn and canvas strips. With all of these elements working together to embellish the surface, value transitions of light and dark were created which activated the surface with a feeling of movement. While the knotted and sewn elements added a three-dimensional quality to the surfaces, I realized that the same relief could be created with paint build-up. Even if the knotted and sewn motifs had been removed from the surfaces, the visual unity of the paintings would not be destroyed. Thus, the joining elements incorporated with the intention of becoming significant visual factors for unity were diminishing in importance.

Thinking back over the development of the investigation, I saw that decoration or ornamental surface embellishment

appeared to be a consistent element in my work. The consistency was dependent upon the influences leading to the choice of a particular device as a visual motif, and the suitability and function of that device as a visual contribution. In the early pieces (Entries 4 and 5), sewing and bradding were important visual elements that were needed for unity in the work. Their introduction into the work recalled an influence from the brilliance and rhythm of ancient decorative textiles. As the work progressed, color and decoration achieved through sewing, tying, and bradding were subdued to close tonal variations. Decorative visual elements were still present as a means of producing a textural surface character throughout the project. The constant use of iridescent bronze paint during the course of the investigation provided a luminous quality that enriched and embellished the surface, and kept the character of the pieces in the realm of the decorative. I became aware toward the end of the investigation that the work, because of its subdued color and feeling of earthiness, reflected my initial fascination with a universal sensibility based on fragmented and worn remnants. The later involvement, in contrast to the earlier transitional pieces (Entries 1, 2, and 3), reflected an energy that had not been present before, perhaps due to my renewed interest in archaic ornamental textile art.

In reviewing my creative project, the positive aspects of joining methods as a means of visually adhering surfaces outweighed the negative aspects. The preferred method of sewing and tying added an appreciable richness to the work. The experimentation with these visual elements proved to be personally meaningful and satisfying by providing a visual freshness and a sensitive, but forceful, energy that was needed in my work. I found the investigation provided many insights into my way of working by bringing into consciousness aspects and considerations that had been unconscious before. These insights and discoveries raise new questions and provide a basis for further work.

APPENDIX
SLIDE IDENTIFICATION

Slide No.

1. "Winterville Fragment: Tableau", 42" x 28"
2. "Camden Fragment", 42" x 28"
3. "Trilithon", 42" x 28"
4. "Oversight", 8" x 7"
5. "Dobova", 8" x 8"
6. "Reviewed Fragment", 10" x 10"
7. "Topographical Tapestry", 72" x 60"
8. "Regained Fragment", 10" x 10"
9. "Expanded Fragment", 10" x 10"
10. "Untitled", 20" x 20"
11. "Topographical Tapestry II", 65" x 78"
12. "Untitled", 20" x 20"























